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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 TAIPEI 001295

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SUBJECT: TAIPEI MAYOR HAU LONG-BIN ON PRESIDENTIAL RACE,
LOCAL POLITICS

Classified By: AIT Director Stephen M. Young, Reason(s): 1.4 (B/D).

¶1. (C) Summary: Taipei Mayor Hau Long-bin (KMT) told the Director on June 5 that he expects KMT presidential candidate Ma Ying-jeou to face a tough, close race against DPP opponent Frank Hsieh. Ma must choose a running mate to strengthen his appeal with Taiwan-born voters, especially in the south. Hau predicted that the legislative and presidential elections will be combined in January 2008 because both the DPP and KMT see that as to their advantage. Hau said the controversy over renaming the Chiang Kai-shek Memorial as the National Taiwan Democracy Memorial Hall has eased as the city and central governments have reached an informal truce to let both names co-exist. Hau said he is moving forward on plans to clean up Taipei's waterways, and he pledged to support AIT's Neihu New Office Compound (NOC) project. End Summary.

A Close Presidential Race, Even in Taipei

¶2. (C) The Director met with Taipei Mayor Hau Long-bin (KMT) at his office on June 5 to discuss political developments and Taipei City issues. Hau was accompanied by long-time supporter and political advisor NTU Prof. Zhuang Wen-si, who continues to work for Hau on a part-time basis. Hau predicted that the 2008 presidential race between KMT candidate Ma Ying-jeou and DPP candidate Frank Hsieh will be close. Hau explained that he defeated his DPP mayoral opponent Frank Hsieh by a margin of 170 thousand votes, while PFP Chairman and independent mayoral candidate James Soong (Chu-yu) cornered another 50 thousand "Blue" votes. According to Hau, this suggests that in Taipei the KMT has a built-in advantage of 220 thousand votes. Even though Taipei is generally considered "safe" territory for the KMT, Hau continued, Hsieh still managed to win 41 percent of the vote. According to Hau, Ma will need to increase the KMT margin in Taipei to 270 thousand votes to win the overall election island-wide.

Running Mate Considerations

¶3. (C) The biggest decision facing both KMT candidate Ma Ying-jeou and DPP candidate Frank Hsieh (Chang-ting) currently is the choice of vice-presidential running mate. Ma might choose KMT Chairman Wu Poh-hsiung, a Taiwan Hakka, to strengthen the ticket's appeal to the Hakka and hopefully

the Taiwanese, Hau suggested. Hau said he disagreed with the view of many in the KMT that the most formidable DPP ticket would combine Hsieh with former premier Su Tseng-chang. Su has a strong administrative background and is a dogged campaigner, but he doesn't add much demographic pull, Hau argued. Yeh Chu-lan, who served as acting mayor in Kaohsiung following Hsieh, has strong support in the former KMT strongholds of Miaoli and Hsinchu. As a woman and a Hakka, Yeh can steal support from Ma in those two important demographics. If Hsieh has his way, Hau predicted, he will choose Yeh.

Candidates Race to the Middle

14. (C) The Director remarked that both Ma Ying-jeou and Frank Hsieh seemed to be "racing to the middle" in the early stages of their presidential campaigns, apparently in an attempt to appeal to the light-Green and light-Blue "swing voters." Are KMT leaders or voters concerned by Ma's moves to the center? Hau said that some Deep Blue supporters are concerned by Ma's embrace of "Taiwanese sensibilities," but they will not abandon him at the polls. Hau asserted that Hsieh is able to appeal to both Blue and Green voters by telling them exactly what they want to hear, but he cannot be trusted. If Ma were to ask his advice, Hau would recommend that Ma "attack Hsieh continuously," and "not respond to anything Hsieh says or does." When the Director mentioned that some observers have questioned Ma's toughness, Hau quickly sprang to Ma's defense. As sitting Taipei mayor, Hau said he fully understood all that Ma had accomplished during his time as mayor, despite considerable adversity. Ma is not a strong self-promoter, Hau continued, and therefore his campaign must

TAIPEI 00001295 002 OF 003

find good people to perform that function for him.

Combined Elections in January 2008

15. (C) Commenting on the Central Election Commission's recent decision to hold the upcoming legislative election on January 12, 2008 rather than in December 2007, Hau predicted that the CEC will also move to hold the presidential election on the same day. Hau explained that Hsieh and the DPP believe holding both elections near the anniversary of the February 28 Incident and the PRC's passage of the Anti-Secession Law will boost Green voter turnout. For their part, Hau continued, KMT leaders hope Ma will benefit from KMT legislators' grassroots campaigns, and that the legislators will enjoy the "coat-tail" effect of Ma's popularity. Since both sides see the combined election as to their advantage, it will come to pass, Hau predicted.

Chiang Memorial Dispute Simmers Down

16. (C) Hau said that President Chen's move to rename the Chiang Kai-shek Memorial Hall as the "National Taiwan Democracy Memorial Hall" had caused some friction with the Ministry of Education, but had done little to worsen the city government's already poor relationship with the central government. Hau and Zhuang said the Taipei City and central governments had reached an "informal truce" on the matter, agreeing to let both names "coexist" for the time being. Hau said he did not expect the Legislative Yuan to act either, for lack of a workable solution. (Note: An LY committee controlled by the KMT voted to block the name change on June 7, but the issue remains in dispute. End Note.)

17. (C) The Director asked whether it was difficult for the KMT to generate support for Chiang Kai-shek. Hau said more than 500,000 of Taiwan's voters, mostly older people, still held Chiang in high regard. Nonetheless, Hau said he opposed the name change not because it disparaged Chiang's reputation, but because the DPP central government was trying

to change the name without LY approval, in violation of relevant laws. Hau told the Director that, although he gave the KMT leadership advance notice of his plan to oppose the name change, he did not coordinate his response with them.

A Mayor's Work is Never Done

18. (C) Hau told the Director that much of the work during his first six months in office has been tedious, but significant progress has already been made on several fronts. Hau credited his team of advisors for their diligence and creativity. Hau mentioned that he meets once a month with Taipei County Magistrate Chou Hsi-wei to coordinate efforts to clean up the polluted Danshui River, the centerpiece issue of his mayoral campaign. Hau stated he intends to expand cleanup efforts to include the Keelung River, once the Danshui project is well underway. All told, Hau expects the City and County of Taipei to spend NTD 20 billion (USD 600 million) on waterway cleanup efforts over the next four years. Although he supports consolidating the now separate governments of Taipei City and Taipei County, Hau predicted that such a merger would not be completed within the four years of his first term. Hau claimed that cooperation between the two governments has increased significantly since he took office.

Hau Pledges Support to Neihu NOC

19. (C) The Director informed Hau that AIT is ready to begin construction at the Neihu site, but needs Hau's cooperation to remove one remaining obstacle. The Taipei City Department of Urban Planning notified AIT on June 4 that a "rear access road" essential to the security design of the building could not be built. This came as a complete surprise to AIT, the Director continued, especially since AIT has been working closely with Urban Planning for over three years. This issue must be resolved quickly, the Director told Hau, otherwise

TAIPEI 00001295 003 OF 003

AIT might miss an important budget request deadline. Hau promised to do his utmost to resolve the problem quickly, remarking that "where there is a will, there is a way."
YOUNG